

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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There is little I can add on policy implications to what was presented yesterday on this issue which, in my opinion, was of outstanding quality.

There is a link between my topic of discussion and that dealt with by Pat Mayhew. I remember that some time ago a Dutch research showed that even the worst methodology applied in carrying out research work has an impact on policy-making. From that point of view, then, we should not be too concerned about the topic we have been dealing with because the impact will be there anyway.

We have seen that victim surveys can be used for various purposes: to generate discussions about organised crime - with which they, obviously, have very little to do since in most cases of organised crime there is no individual victim (and as we know, these surveys are based entirely on individual victims); to generate attitudes that favour the introduction of a crime policy directed more towards social development than crime-repression strategies (as Irwin Waller mentioned); as well as to promote policies to reduce the availability of hand-guns (also discussed by Irwin Waller). I think, therefore, that one can conclude that the direct policy implications of victim surveys are rather limited.

The publication of the results of the survey may only have direct policy implications if something occurs similar to what once happened in Holland. The Minister of Justice (who at the time was 7,000 miles away) felt impelled to take positive action after learning that Holland was reported in one of the most popular Dutch newspapers, as being a leading nation in crime.

However, nothing is likely to happen simply from the presentation of the results of a victim survey. It would be more effective to compare them with other data, or to convince authorities (in or outside the criminal justice system), to indeed do something about these results.

From the papers presented yesterday, I got the general impression that there are a number of main issues that need to be considered: what is the function of a survey, what is its actual aim, and what does it actually show us.

This depends very much on the questionnaire that is used; the more questions it has, the more purposes the survey will serve. However, as pointed out by Joanna Shapland, we might be using the survey for too many purposes and, as a result, the original aim of the survey may consequently become somewhat blurred.

Generally speaking, I would say that a victim survey has three main functions. Firstly, it informs us as to the "counting of crime" (as Joanna Shapland called it); in other words, by citing different crime-related events experienced by individuals it shows to what extent the public is afflicted by crime. Secondly, it provides information as to the selectiveness of the criminal justice system in dealing with crime. This information can be taken from police and court figures, and by comparing them with survey results on the satisfaction of the public and of the

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victims of crime. Finally, it can also have the function of a general consumers' survey. In this sense, it could be considered as the major marketing instrument of the criminal justice system since the results can be used not only in the criminal justice system, but also (as Irwin Waller pointed out) in assisting social development.

A victim survey not only provides information about victims (as pointed out by Joanna Shapland), it also informs about the general public, or rather the law-abiding citizens. Joanna Shapland makes a very good point when she asserts that the survey could also be used to evaluate crime policy or social policy; unfortunately this happens very rarely. The order in which she presented and promoted the "aim - ready - fire" model of service delivery is often somehow reversed to "aim - fire - ready".

Personally, I think that the real policy implications of victim surveys will only come about if we, the scientific experts, are able to convince policy-makers that the results of the survey have something useful to offer them, and that they can base a sound and rational crime policy or social policy on those figures. As Mr. Kendall already pointed out, this may well be the most challenging task for the future, because the horizon of policy-makers does not extend as far as that of the scientific world.

From that point of view, I believe the survey is, in a way, at a cross-road because, as Renée Zauberman pointed out, on the one hand we are sitting here at this Conference talking about an international survey, whereas, in my opinion, the real future of the crime survey is on a local level, where it would probably be easier to deal not only with policy-makers, but also, for example, with criminal justice or social authorities in order to implement the results of the victims survey. The examples given by Renée Zauberman and Kees Van Der Vijver show us that this, in fact, would be possible.

One could argue that policemen could also be convinced as to the need and usefulness of a rational crime policy, and Mr. Kees Van Der Vijver is a living example of this. Unfortunately, not all policemen are as easily convinced, and the same applies to police in the Netherlands; nevertheless, I do not think there is a total absence of hope with regards to this situation. The French example, as presented by Renée Zauberman, emphasizes once again that this would be the best way to implement the results of the victim survey at the local level.

The policy implications for the development of the survey seem to point in three directions: it would be really worthwhile a) to have a remake of the survey in developing countries which so far have not participated; b) to repeat it in those countries in which problems were encountered when carrying it out; and c) the same in relation to some Eastern and Central European countries.

However, the real future of the survey should be an increased attention to the local level, by means of setting up various kinds of local projects (as is being done in France and in the Netherlands by the Amsterdam police), and thus try to make the most of this valuable instrument.